



NEWS RELEASE

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE

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Kirtland to host Peacekeeper Challenge '97

Sept. 2, 1997
97-09-04

KIRTLAND AIR FORCE BASE, N.M. – Kirtland will host the 16th Peacekeeper Challenge, the Air Force's annual world-wide Security Forces combat readiness competition, Sept. 14-20.

The annual Peacekeeper Challenge competition, which has its roots beginning with the 1952 Strategic Air Command Air Police marksmanship competition, is a test of physical stamina and combat-readiness skills. The 1952 marksmanship event featured the M-1 Carbine, while today team members compete with the M-60 machine gun, the M-16 rifle, the M-9 handgun and the M-203 grenade launcher.

This year's team competition includes a 1.5-mile physical fitness obstacle course, a night-time combat defense scenario called "Defender Challenge," as well as machine gun, rifle, grenade launcher, and handgun marksmanship events. The only individual event is the Chief's Challenge. The Chief's Challenge, the final event, features the best fitness challenger from each team that competed in the team physical fitness challenge.

Teams from the Air Force's twelve major commands, the Canadian Forces Air Command, and the United Kingdom's Royal Air Force Regiment will compete in the week-long competition. "The best of over 30,000 world-wide Air Force Security Forces personnel gather each year to compete in tests of their combat readiness skills," said Bruce Kilgore, Peacekeeper Challenge '97 director.

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Followers of the annual competition will notice changes this year, which represent the new force protection mission of security forces.

“Our theme for this year’s competition is ‘We Own the Night,’ and in keeping with that theme, we will hold our first night-time Defender Challenge,” Kilgore said.

Other changes observers might notice are rifle teams and machine gun teams competing as a single combat unit, and grenade teams comprised of two grenadiers rather than the historical single grenadier competing as a single combat unit.

The Air Force will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary on Sept. 18th, during the week-long competition. Although the competition is not quite as old as the Air Force, beginning in 1952 and lasting until 1981, security policemen from worldwide commands met annually to compete in pistol and rifle marksmanship competitions. Then in 1981, the Headquarters Air Force Office of Security Police expanded the competition by creating a premier event and adding combat challenges to more realistically test the skills required of security police forces.

Changes in Peacekeeper '97 will reflect mission changes made in January when the Air Force chief of security police was redesignated the Air Force director of security forces. On July 1, the security police career field became the security forces career field. The Air Force Security Police Agency was redesignated the Air Force Security Forces Center and Peacekeeper Challenge will move to Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, effective Oct. 1. The Air Force director of security forces, Brig Gen Richard A. Coleman, will move to Lackland AFB and command the AFSFC.

Note to editors: For more information, call Senior Airman Paul Gritton, (505) 846-4238/5991.